



## Everyone should worry about open government

Sunshine Week came and went last week with little notice in this part of the state.

Be that as it may, the cause is worthy, and the need bears occasional mention.

Sunshine Week celebrates a year-around cause dear to many, and vital to all of us in a free society: open government.

Its backers range from the American Library Association to the League of Women Voters to the Society of Professional Journalists. And while many of this effort's leaders are news people, it's not just a "media" cause.

Sunshine is meant for all of us. Secrecy in government hurts everyone.

Over years of struggle, Sunshine proponents have passed laws in nearly every state requiring government meetings and records to be open to the public. The federal government, too, has such laws.

But that's not the end of the fight. Every year, state legislators and members of Congress, office holders and lobbying groups propose dozens of new exemptions for state and federal laws. Worse yet, many federal agencies simply ignore the law when they choose.

The federal Freedom of Information Act has no enforcement tools, no penalties, no teeth. A bill to create an ombudsman's office to handle citizen complaints passed Congress and was signed into law a couple of years ago, but it's been hamstrung by poor treatment and budget cuts from the Obama administration.

And while the administration pays lip service to openness, or "transparency," as the politicians like to call it today, it too often backs more secrecy, especially in the areas of security, law enforcement and diplomacy.

But even workaday federal agencies sometime ignore this law. And despite charges by some politicians that open government is just a "media" issue, it's often an ordinary citizen who's faced with a recalcitrant agency. The taxpayer's choices are few: forget the information he or she needed, or pay big legal fees to sue the government.

And while lawsuits often succeed, they can take years and cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. Why should anyone, a citizen or a reporter, have to sue the government to get what should be an open record, available to anyone who asks?

"The media" often get involved in this issue because it's our job to ask questions of the government. We see the abuses day after day; the average person could go a lifetime and never get turned down on a request for government records. Until the day comes....

Around here, we find that public officials normally do their best to honor both the open records and open meetings laws. City and county attorneys usually advise officials to comply, and Kansas law does carry penalties: \$500 fines and court orders to take classes on open government.

Still, there are exceptions. Gov. Sam Brownback invited members of the Legislature to meetings at his official mansion, Cedar Crest, which obviously were aimed an influencing legislation this year. The governor and legislative leaders bobbed and weaved, but it was an ugly move. Mr. Brownback should have known better than to skirt the law.

For what we expect of our leaders is not lip service, but compliance with the letter and spirit of the laws which declare public business to be public. It's our right, and it's the right thing to do.

- Steve Haynes



## Casey's Comments

By Casey McCormick



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Why don't we pay attention to our history lessons?

One of our troops went on a killing rampage while away at war. Unfortunately his targets were innocent Afghans. This incident is just another that forces us to wonder what we are doing in that country.

Personally, after taking out Osama bin Laden, we had probably gone as far in the War on Terror as possible in that region.

There is a real problem with being a foreign force occupying Afghanistan. It can't be done.

The British wanted to use it as a buffer so other forces couldn't

enter their prized, Imperial jewel of India in the 1800s. A century later the Russians thought their tanks and helicopters could simply overwhelm an inferior nation.

But Afghanistan can not be tamed by modern weapons or better trained soldiers.

Just like the Brits and Russians found out, the local Pashtun warriors will continue to blend in to the cities and villages or hide in the mountains. With their traditional Islamic creed of holding jihad against anyone from the west, they will not convert or quit but rather die first.

## Doth our law judge any man before it hear him and know what he doeth?

**Amendment I**  
Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

**Amendment II**  
A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.

**Amendment III**  
No Soldier shall, in time of peace be quartered in any house, without the consent of the Owner, nor in time of war, but in a manner to be prescribed by law.

**Amendment IV**  
The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

**Amendment V**  
No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the Militia, when in actual service in time of War or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offense to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against him-

## Letter to the Editor

self, nor be deprived of life, liberty or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.

**Amendment VI**  
In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the State and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the Assistance of Counsel for his defense.

**Amendment VII**  
In Suits at common law, where the value in controversy shall exceed twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved, and no fact tried by a jury, shall be otherwise re-examined in any Court of the United States, than according to the rules of

common law.

**Amendment VIII**  
Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.

**Amendment IX**  
The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.

**Amendment X**  
The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people.

Unless they can prove their law doth not violate the Bill of Rights - it is a violation of the Constitution \* such is - time twisting clock change x-+==+

To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the Heaven: Eccl. 3:1.... for it is time to seek the Lord,.... Hos. 10:12B

Frank Sowers  
Benkelman

## Hangin' With Marge

By Margaret Bucholtz



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I know that I have talked about "Molly" before and what a friend she has become, a spoiled rotten dog but, none the less, our friend.

She has been to the vet more in the almost two years we have had her than Kurt and I have been to a doctor. The last major thing was at Christmas time. She completely quit eating and just laid around and looked at us with a sad face.

We took her to the vet and he told us that she was fine except for her stomach and she had a little problem there. However the biggest problem was that with the extra company and stress of other dogs around she was just upset. He gave us some medicine for her stomach and told us to just wait and when she was really hungry she would eat.

Kurt babied her around and tried to get her to eat and I kept telling him that she would when

she was hungry. Of course both of us keep slipping her a pup-poni when the other wasn't looking.

Finally she is back to eating but it is only on her terms. She won't eat anything until the evening. Then she wants everything she can find (or maybe I should say what we can find). One day she had a really hungry day and she ate little ceasers, dry dog food, leftovers and all the little treats she could get. Kurt and I were so happy to see her feeling better.

That night I went to bed early and Molly came to the bedroom with me. I am sure it was so she could get her pup-peroni, but that was fine. I was watching television and all of the sudden a smell came drifting by and I started gagging. She just laid there on the floor in her little bed and her big brown eyes looked up at me as if to say "What's wrong?"

I jumped out of bed got the air fresher and sprayed the room. Kurt came to bed shortly after that and he started watching television and once again the air turned to that stinky cloud. I grabbed the can of spray as Kurt said "I wondered what you had that in bed for."

Now we sleep with the can on the headboard just in case the little gal gets gas again.

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**GOD SAYS**  
Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may live: and let me not be ashamed of my hope. Psalms 119:116

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www.sfccfamily.com  
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**Praise the Lord**